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STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS SEEK PUBLIC INPUT ON PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

INDIANAPOLIS – According to the 2007 State Victimization Survey, 18 percent of Indiana women surveyed reported having experienced some type of sexual assault in her lifetime, and 13 percent reported having been raped.

State health officials say only 12.3 percent of women who were raped reported the crime to the authorities, making sexual violence a “silent epidemic” in the state. That is why the Indiana State Department of Health is hosting 10 district forums to start a dialogue about sexual violence and get community input on how to prevent it.

The Office of Women’s Health at the Indiana State Department of Health recently received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address sexual violence as a public health issue.

“Sexual violence has been shown to cause or contribute to many physical and mental health problems,” says Abby Kelly-Smith, director of the Rape Prevention and Education Program at the Indiana State Department of Health. “Not only can sexual violence result in physical injuries and disabilities, sexually transmitted infections, chronic pain, and gastrointestinal disorders, sexual assault has also been linked to eating disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and even suicide.

“In addition, both victims of sexual violence and the people who commit the crimes are more likely to have substance abuse problems and/or engage in risky sexual activity,” says Kelly-Smith.

The Office of Women’s Health has partnered with the Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Council to develop a state Sexual Violence Prevention Plan. The Family and Social Services Administration and the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute both have representatives serving on the Council. The information learned at the 10 district sexual violence prevention forums will be used to help write that plan.

“These district forums will provide an important opportunity to hear from Indiana citizens about sexual violence,” says Kelly-Smith. “The State Department of Health and the Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Council want input from the local communities on the possible causes of sexual violence as well as suggestions on strategies for preventing it.”

Following is the schedule for the first nine sexual violence prevention forums. The time and location of the District 1 forum is still being organized:

- **Wednesday, Nov. 12, 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. (registration at 12:30 p.m.)**
Medical Society Building, 709 Clay St., 3rd floor
Fort Wayne (District 3)
- **Thursday, Nov. 13, 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. (registration at 8:30 a.m.)**
Elkhart County Health Department, 608 Oakland Ave.
Elkhart (District 2)

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION FORUMS
ADD ONE

- **Thursday, Nov. 20, 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. (registration at 12:30 p.m.)**
Bloomington Adult Community Center, 349 S. Walnut St.
Bloomington (District 8)
- **Friday, Nov. 21, 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. (registration at 8:30 a.m.)**
Ivy Tech, 500 Industrial Dr.
Lawrenceburg (District 9)
- **Monday, Nov. 24, 7:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. (registration at 6:30 p.m.)**
Putnam County Hospital, 1542 S. Bloomington St.
Greencastle (District 7)
- **Tuesday, Nov. 25, 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. (registration at 12:30 p.m.)**
Evansville Central Library, 200 SE Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.
Evansville (District 10)
- **Tuesday, Dec. 2, 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. (registration at 8:30 a.m.)**
Tippecanoe County Extension Office, 3150 Sagamore Parkway South
Lafayette (District 4)
- **Wednesday, Dec. 3, 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. (registration at 12:30 p.m.)**
Kennedy Library, 1700 W. McGalliard Rd.
Muncie (District 6)
- **Thursday, Dec. 4, 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. (registration at 8:30 a.m.)**
Hendricks County Government Center, 355 S. Washington St.
Danville (District 5)